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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. DENHAM).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

February 6, 2012.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JEFF DENHAM to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 17, 2012, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

HOUSE REPUBLICAN TRANSPORTATION BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPS) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, there is an old saying that goes: when all you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail.

These days, it seems the Republican toolbox is down to just one tool. Because for all of the energy choices available to America, every Republican energy plan centers on one thing, drilling for more oil.

First it was simply: drill here, drill now. Well, we are. There is more drill-

ing taking place in the U.S. lands and water now than during the Bush administration. Indeed, last year, we relied less on foreign oil than in any of the past 16 years. Clean, renewable energy usage is at an all-time high as well.

Then it was: drill for energy independence. It sounds great, but unfortunately we can't simply drill our way to energy independence. Even with all of the expanded drilling we are doing, the plain fact is that we use too much oil and have too few domestic reserves.

Next it was: drilling will create jobs and put everyone back to work. That claim was based on borderline fictional numbers in a report bought and paid for—surprise—by the oil industry.

Now House Republicans have found a new problem that can only be solved by opening more of the country to risky and reckless drilling: filling the funding gap in the highway trust fund. Their latest proposal would combine three bills to open more of America's most sensitive lands and waters to drilling. Supposedly, this is how we are going to fund repairs to America's crumbling bridges and highways.

It shouldn't come as a surprise that again the numbers don't add up. Proponents of this approach now claim that we can make up the \$6 billion a year in the highway trust fund by mandating oil drilling just about everywhere. Yet according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, drilling for oil and gas in protected coastal waters, as they wish, at best would produce only about \$80 million per year of assets. That's a small fraction of the funds needed to repair and upgrade America's roads and bridges.

They also want to open up a pristine coastal plain of Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge—a special place I've visited—and speed up development of Federal oil shale deposits across the West. Any potential revenues from this drilling, however, will not come close

to meeting the needs of the highway trust fund either. Whatever minimal funds do materialize would not be available for several years, maybe a decade. In other words, it is too little and it is too late.

Mr. Speaker, the only way to make progress in solving our current fiscal mess is not to create a new round of giveaways and favors to the oil industry. It would be better to start cutting some of the unnecessary tax breaks that the oil and gas industry now receives, and use that money to pay for the transportation bill. That's because they are unnecessary. Of the world's 12 most profitable corporations last year, fully half are oil companies. Repealing these tax breaks would save more than \$40 billion over 10 years, which would alone cover almost all the gap in the highway trust fund revenues. Americans are already squeezed at the pump. There is no reason why they should be handing over tax dollars to these wildly profitable companies.

Mr. Speaker, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill was the worst in history, crippling the gulf coast economy, destroying livelihoods of fishermen and tour operators, and killing wildlife for hundreds of miles. It was eerily similar to the destructive oil spill of 1969. That's when Santa Barbara beaches were smothered with oil—that's where I come from—that killed thousands of birds, fish, and sea lions.

Now House Republicans want to expose more of our coastal communities, including Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, to the tender mercies of the oil and gas industry. They want to mandate new drilling off central coast beaches despite our community's long-held view that the current drilling should be ended, not extended.

They want to gut the environmental laws of our State that our community has used to protect its coastline from the kinds of devastation that the 1969 oil spill brought to Santa Barbara.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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